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SUBJECT: VIETNAM RESPONSE ON PARTNERING FOR GLOBAL HUNGER AND FOOD SECURITY

REF: 09 STATE 107298

¶1. (U) Summary. U.S. Embassy Hanoi officers met with officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) on Tuesday, October 27, to gauge the Ministries' initial reaction and response to Secretary of State Clinton's letter and proposal, "Partnering for Food Security: Moving Forward." Although the Government of Vietnam (GVN) officials were not prepared to offer concrete proposals at the meeting, they seemed engaged and asked questions that underscored genuine interest in how to adopt the proposal and make it work for Vietnam. The meeting concluded with GVN officials promising to send any follow-on food security questions or proposals to the Embassy. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Discussing food security, GVN officials focused on the many risks to Vietnam's critical rice crops, including: extreme weather, climate change, poor crop storage facilities, foreign agricultural protectionism and price stability. GVN officials also suggested that, in addition to feeding its citizens, food security included maintaining Vietnam's position as a food exporter, specifically including rice. The officials stated that Vietnam was already helping other countries with their food security needs, providing technical expertise on rice production to a number of countries, including Cuba, Venezuela and South Africa.

¶3. (U) GVN officials also acknowledged that the impact of climate change on the Mekong River Delta (MRD) could dramatically affect Vietnam's food security needs. GVN officials agreed that Vietnam's agricultural sector was hugely dependent on the MRD and would be at a significant disadvantage if access to the MRD was impeded by rising levels of salination, pollution, or by other countries. Embassy officers suggested that the GVN's concerns regarding the MRD might present opportunities to partner with other countries in the MRD in developing a food security proposal that would benefit not only Vietnam, but the whole region.

¶4. (U) GVN officials encouraged USG to become a donor for "South-South" development cooperation and inquired where the funding for any food security proposals would come from. Specifically, they asked about the mechanisms for allocation of the \$20 billion dollars pledged at the G-8-plus meeting in L'Aquila, Italy. Embassy officers noted that both funding and allocation would likely hinge on the proposals tabled by various countries in response to the Secretary's proposal, and encouraged the GVN to consider programs with a regional context that leveraged multilateral institutions. The meeting ended with GVN officials promising to send to the Embassy any proposals developed by the GVN for next month's World Food Security Summit in Rome, Italy.  
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